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SUPPLEMENT TO

The Mysore Gazette

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BANGALORE, THURSDAY, AUGUST 6, 1908.

Abstract Proceedings of the Mysore Legislative Council.

The Council met in the Council Chamber at the Public Offices, Bangalore, on Wednesday the 5th August 1908 at 1 P.M.

PRESENT.

V. P. MADHAVA RAO, ESQ., C.I.E., Dewan (Presiding).

Ex-officio Members.

T. ANANDA RAO, ESQ., B.A., (First Councillor).
K. P. PUTTANNA CHETTY, ESQ., (Second Councillor).

Additional Members.

Official.

RAJAKARYAPRAVINA A. RANGASWAMI IYENGAR, ESQ., B.A., B.L.
H. J. BHABHA, ESQ., M.A.
RAO BAHADUR M. MUTHANNA, ESQ.
S. NARAYANA RAO, ESQ.
M. KANTHARAJ URS, ESQ., B.A.
K. S. CHANDRASEKHARA AIYAR, ESQ., B.A., B.L.

Non-official.

RAJAMANTRAPRAVINA C. SRINIVASIENGAR, ESQ.
V. N. NARASIMMIYENGAR, ESQ.
M. C. RANGIENGAR, ESQ., B.A.
B. NAGAPPA, ESQ., (Bar-at-law).
SYED AMIR HASSAN, ESQ.

C. S. BALASUNDARAM IYER, (Secretary).

THE SECRETARY reported that Mr. K. S. Chandrasekhara Aiyar took his seat as an additional member of the Council.

THE SECRETARY reported that Regulation I of 1908 to amend the Mysore Court Fees Regulation, III of 1900, and Regulation II of 1908 to amend the Mysore Stamp Regulation, II of 1900, had received the assent of His Highness the Maharaja.

MR. T. ANANDA ROW moved for leave to introduce a bill called the "Mysore Newspapers Bill" to provide for the efficient control of the publication of newspapers and other printed works containing public news, and in doing so said,—

The Government of His Highness the Maharaja have had under consideration the question of placing the publication of newspapers in Mysore under better control, and of providing more effective means than are available under the existing law for dealing with that section of the public Press in Mysore which has for some time past been creating considerable mischief by misrepresenting the actions of the Government and attributing unworthy motives to it, and by indulging in remarks calculated to promote racial hatred, and in objectionable criticisms of the British Government in its relations with its own subjects as well as with the Native States. His Highness' Government view with extreme disapproval the attempts made by organs published in the State to mislead and prejudice the people of Mysore against the Paramount Power.

Action of the kind contemplated is all the more necessary in view of the pernicious effects this class of writing is calculated to have on the minds of ignorant and uninformed persons generally and of students and young people in particular, by undermining the feelings of reverence associated with His Highness personally and by destroying all respect for authority. It would be a grave error to underestimate the degree and the extent of these evil effects, since newspapers are in these days no longer limited in their circulation to the better educated classes who are in a position to discount misstatements. On the contrary, owing to the policy of Government in promoting elementary education among all classes, every section of the community, rural as well as urban, is now exposed to the influence of the Press, whether for good or for evil; and, consequently, a new responsibility is imposed upon the Government to protect the ignorantly credulous from evil influences which it is within their power to control.

The language adopted by some of the newspapers in question would imply that His Highness is not responsible for the actions of his Government, that he is dissociated from his Government and that he does not concern himself personally with the administration of the State. It is necessary once again to affirm in the clearest manner that His Highness is personally and solely responsible for the good government of the country and that while all fair, honest and *bona fide* criticism of his administration is welcomed, comments cannot be permitted in the public Press which pass the bounds of such criticism, or tend to bring his administration into contempt, or misrepresent the motives and actions of his advisers and officers.

The legislation we propose to adopt is not a new idea. Attempts have been made by the Government in the past to deal with the growing evil. A perusal of the excerpts from the newspapers published in the State during the past six months will show to you how demoralising in its effects is the literature purveyed by these newspapers. When the law gives the necessary powers for controlling the possession and use of arms, explosives, poisons and other dangerous substances, for preventing the spread of contagious diseases and prohibiting acts which are likely to endanger the public safety, it is certainly an anomaly that the Government should be powerless to arrest the dissemination of the far more dangerous and hurtful moral poison which journals of the type under notice instil into the public mind week after week. The common people are not sufficiently educated to properly discount the utterances of journals of this character. To them, everything which appears in print has the authority of matter published in the Government Gazette. In fact to the people in the country side every printed sheet in a gazette. You may have heard of patent medicines advertised in the vernacular newspapers being eagerly sought after and readily purchased because they had been published in what

they call "the Gazette." It is notorious that when in the beginning of last year, certain local newspapers gave currency to false stories about the intended assumption of the Kolar and Bangalore Districts by the British Government, every word of it was believed as true even in remote corners of the State. Considering the relations existing between the Ruler of a Native State and the Paramount Power, the Government of His Highness cannot neglect the responsibility which lies upon them to prevent the loyalty of his subjects to the Paramount Power from being undermined in the manner which the British Government might well resent, by reckless and mendacious statements of the character described. In Mysore in particular, these carping and ill-natured criticisms of the Paramount Power are singularly inappropriate and highly unbecoming in that the State has from the beginning of its constitution been the recipient of special consideration from the Paramount Power and the object of its continued solicitude. There is also the less justification in Mysore for misstatements and misrepresentations of the kind, as the Government has at all times been ready to place at the disposal of the Press and of the public such information regarding its actions and intentions as can be published without detriment to public interests. With this view a Press Room has been opened and the Proceedings of Government intended for publication are placed on the table. The meetings of the Representative Assembly also afford to the members of the Assembly the opportunity to elicit information on matters of public interest first-hand from the Government; the meetings are open to the public and the subjects brought forward by the members are discussed in public. Nor, if other practical means can be suggested for affording further facilities to the public for obtaining early and correct information on public matters, will the Government be backward in adopting them.

There is danger to the State also from another class of criticisms which we frequently meet with in these excerpts. The newspapers evidently think that by systematically vilifying His Highness' Government and his officers, they are doing nothing to impair his position as the Ruler of the State. It cannot be too frequently or too emphatically impressed on the newspapers that in spite of all the Councils and assemblies and administrative organizations, the basis on which Government rests is autocratic in its nature, since all power and responsibility are vested in His Highness the Maharaja, who is personally and solely responsible for the good government of the country. The administrative arrangements made both at the Rendition and at the Installation of His Highness the present Maharaja may have to some extent obscured the real nature of the kind of rule under which the State is administered; and possibly these and the fact of Mysore having been under the administration of the British Government for 50 years before the Rendition may have led to doubts being entertained as to the power of the Government to adopt laws for the regulation of the public Press at variance with those prevailing in British India. But from the description I have given of the nature of the rule under which Mysore is governed you will understand that His Highness the Maharaja has absolute power to regulate the public Press. I may refer in this connection to the action taken in the year 1894 in the Desabhimani case, and to the warning publicly conveyed in the order passed on the *Suryodaya* incident of last year, from which it is clear that, in legislating on the subject, the Government are not creating any new punitive power more formidable than that which is already inherent in His Highness' sovereign prerogative. Such being His Highness' undoubted powers it might be argued that it would be sufficient if similar executive action were taken in the case of any newspaper that actually offended. But on mature consideration, His Highness has arrived at the conclusion that in the interests of the newspaper Press itself, and in order to avoid as far as possible the necessity for employing the severe disciplinary measures which constitute the ultimate remedy in cases of extreme misconduct, it is advisable to introduce the present general measure which, while not imposing any harassing restriction on the legitimate liberty of the Press, will serve to remind the editors and publishers of newspapers of the obligations attaching to their responsible calling and of the penalty which will follow violation of the same.

The provisions of the new law which we propose to introduce are very simple and it is unnecessary to comment on them at any great length. Section 2 provides that no newspaper shall be published without the written permission of Government.

If any person contravenes this provision, section 4 empowers Government to require him to leave Mysore within seven days and to prohibit him from re-entering the State without permission and also, if necessary, to declare the Press and all its plant to be confiscated. Failure to leave the State or re-entry without permission will, under section 5, entail the forcible expulsion of the offender. In order to provide for the contingency of contumacious disobedience on the part of a suppressed newspaper, sections 6 and 7 provide for the exclusion from Mysore Territory of a Mysore paper which, after being prohibited under the Regulation from publication in the State, removes itself to British India and from there continues to circulate the newspaper in Mysore, and also for the exclusion from Mysore of any paper, *e.g.*, the *Yugantar* which has been prohibited in British India. If any such prohibited newspaper is circulated in Mysore, section 7 provides that the District Magistrate may declare all copies of such newspaper, wherever found, forfeited to Government and take steps to seize all such copies, and that the Government may deal with the offender in the same manner as if he had printed or published a newspaper without permission, by requiring him to leave Mysore and prohibiting him from re-entering the State. I must not omit to refer also to section 3 of the Regulation which provides that any permission given under section 2 may at any time be withdrawn by the Government. This is perhaps the most important provision of the bill, but I may take this opportunity to give the assurance that in undertaking the present legislation, no change of policy is intended and that the Government do not mean to interfere with mere criticisms of the administration. To quote from the order passed in the *Suryodaya* case, "His Highness' Government cannot accentuate too strongly the fact that it is not to any criticism of His Highness' administration that they take exception. Criticism when well-informed they are prepared to welcome heartily; and when it is ill-informed and even when it appears to be spiteful, they are ready to accord it the fullest toleration. They draw the line, however, at the dissemination of absolute untruths which are calculated to excite apprehension among His Highness' subjects as to the good faith of the British Government and which reflect injuriously no less upon the person than upon the administration of His Highness the Maharaja."

The present Bill is almost entirely a reproduction, with the necessary variations to adapt it to Mysore, of the British enactment now in operation in the Civil and Military Station of Bangalore; the only addition that is made is with reference to forfeiture of the printing press. It is obvious that an enactment of this kind, passed with a view to enable the Political Agent to deport blackmailers who may take shelter in tracts situated within Native Territory, but administered by the Political Agent, presupposes the power on the part of the Native State to deport such blackmailers and disseminators of dangerous falsehoods from its own territories.

I may also be permitted to say that because a law of this kind is proposed to be brought on the Statute Book, it does not follow that it will be put into force in regard to all or any of the newspapers published in the State. Judging from the analogy of the Civil and Military Station of Bangalore where the enactment is not known to have been enforced even in a single instance during the 17 years it has been in operation, I should imagine that no occasion will arise for enforcing the proposed Regulation in Mysore. But the necessity for a Regulation like this is imperative. If the various evils to which reference has been made in the Statement of Objects and Reasons are to be effectually remedied, if the weakening of His Highness' authority by persistentamisrepresentation of his Government is to be prevented, if the dissemination of untruths about the Paramount Power is to be put a stop to, if the attempts to promote racial hatred are to be checked, and above all if the rising generation is to be protected from a demoralization which, under present conditions, is facilitated by that very spread of education which it is the duty of the State to encourage, and which, by the recent action of the State in making vernacular education in all classes of primary schools completely free, will reach all sections and grades of the population, thus imposing an added responsibility on the State, we must not hesitate to adopt a law of the kind which is the only effective means of keeping editors and publishers of newspapers in mind of their duty to society and of the limitations under which a business having so important a bearing upon the well-being of society can be conducted.

MR. SYED AMIR HASSAN in seconding the motion said,—Sir, it is my humble opinion that the introduction of a Regulation like the one now under consideration is very necessary in Mysore. I have often observed the mischief created by misrepresenting the actions of Government and publishing scurrilous articles against public servants of all ranks. Most of these papers being very cheap and sensational are freely subscribed for by village officers and hobli school masters throughout the State who take a delight in reading out those articles to the villagers with running comments of their own, which tend to create hatred towards Government and its officers and to lower the estimation in which Government and its officers are held.

I can say from my own experience that, irrespective of the other mischief done, the prestige of the public authorities has suffered much during the last 25 or 30 years as the result of such irresponsible journalism and I should therefore think that on this as well as on other grounds it is high time the source of evil was checked.

For these reasons I beg to cordially support the measure now introduced.

The motion was put and carried.

MR. T. ANANDA RAO moved that the rules of business be suspended to permit of the Bill being taken into consideration immediately and passed.

MR. K. P. PUTTANNA CHETTY seconded the motion.

The motion was put and carried.

MR. T. ANANDA RAO moved that the Bill be taken into consideration and passed.

MR. SYED AMIR HASSAN seconded the motion.

The SECRETARY read the Bill for the information of the Council.

MR. RANGIENGAR:—Mr. President,—I deplore the circumstances which have necessitated the introduction of the Bill. Around us in parts of British India events are happening which augur ill to the country. The beneficent work of a century of steady, patient and disinterested toil, with all its assured progressive tendencies is being undone by mad impulses which are suicidal, inhuman and un-Aryan.

India is essentially a country in which the virtues of loyalty, respect for authority, obedience to law and abhorrence of every species of crime and violence are not needed to be taught and acquired, but are innate and instinctive. The vast majority of the people are staunch on the side of law and order and view with detestation the recent outrages and acts of lawlessness perpetrated by insane mobs or imbecile individuals. A section of the Press in India oblivious of its supreme responsibility has unfortunately chosen to disseminate the most pernicious ideas. The paramount Government, whose first duty is to preserve peace and order, was therefore constrained to have recourse to repressive measures for counteracting and eradicating the forces that make for violence, disorder and anarchy.

In Mysore the people happily remain firm in their loyalty to their Ruler and to the supreme Government. His Highness the Maharaja not long ago gave public and authoritative expression to his own and his people's liveliest feelings of friendship and gratitude to the British Government. His Highness' subjects look upon his word as law and render cheerful and implicit obedience. And yet, I regretfully feel bound to admit, after reading the excerpts alluded to by Mr. Ananda Rao, the correctness and cogency of the reasons urged in support of the Bill. The learning, the zeal and the ingenuity displayed by the Press are worthy of better purposes than those to which they have been applied. Liberty of the Press within the limits set by law and morality, is productive of incalculable good. But when it transgresses those limits, it degenerates into license and wields enormous power for mischief and evil. Without therefore questioning the propriety of remedying an existing and growing evil, at one time it occurred to me that recourse to legislation was unnecessary because His Highness the Maharaja has ample inherent power to take such steps as he may deem proper for dealing with the newspapers conducted in a spirit of malicious hostility to the best interests of the State. But I am now satisfied that by bringing the measure before the Council, certain distinct advantages are derivable such as demonstrating the confidence of Government in the justness and appropriateness of the Bill, the willingness of Government to subject its provisions to public

discussion in Council and the esteem in which the Council itself is held. If the Bill is passed by the Council and eventually becomes law, it will go on the Statute Book of Mysore with all the moral support which conformity to established methods never fails to secure. Sir, I heartily approve of the principle of the Bill.

MR. NAGAPPA:—Sir, I regret the force of circumstances which necessitated the Government of His Highness the Maharaja of Mysore to introduce this measure.

I feel that I shall not be justified in recording a silent vote upon this Bill, without expressing my reasons. With the spread of primary education among all classes due to the establishment by the Government, of village and hobli schools, where elementary education was given almost free—now made completely free—grew the desire to read newspapers. The increasing activity in all walks of life in our State during the last quarter of a century contributed not a little to the demand for news of all sorts. Not only are many more papers published now than even a few years ago, but the number of copies of individual papers has increased also, especially in the case of Vernacular papers. It is but a truism to say that the Press in Mysore, as it is in British India, has greater influence now than ever. As a member of the agricultural community which forms the bulk of the population of the State, and as a representative of the Bar, I have had great opportunities of coming in contact with the people and to know exactly the working of their mind. We all know that national aspirations in them are nascent and that they have been influenced to a great extent by what appears in the public Press. I was more than astonished to find in many instances some persons, who have received some education, namely, those who are able only to read and write their mother-tongue, blindly believing some of the misstatements appearing in Vernacular papers and arguing important questions both of State and Imperial politics, upon the incorrect data furnished to them by some of the newspapers. They are, as a rule, so credulous and uninformed as not to discount misstatements in newspapers and often mistake them for authoritative statements published in a Gazette. It is my sad experience to find that the Press in general, and in particular the Vernacular Press in Mysore, has not exercised a healthy influence over the credulous and uninformed great mass of the people of the State and over the impressionable and immature minds of the youth.

The leading journals of the Western countries and especially in Great Britain wield considerable influence in everyday life and express popular opinion more directly than Parliament itself. This considerable influence is mainly due to the fact that these organs are owned and edited by persons whose enterprise, insight and judgment is of a very high order, who take a personal interest in journalism and have a full sense of their responsibilities in relation both to the guidance of public opinion and to the position of the journalistic profession.

I hope I shall not be mistaken when I say that the Press in general, and in particular the Vernacular Press, in Mysore, is by no means perfect. It is also my sad experience to find that some of the newspapers in the State are not conducted by the proprietors, managers or editors, with a full sense of their responsibilities in relation both to the guidance of public opinion and to the position of the journalistic profession. I hold very strong views regarding the mischief that is caused and is ever likely to be caused by allowing unchecked the publication of such newspapers. We have had sufficient experience by the recent horrible bomb outrages in the north, which were according to the recorded confessions of one of the prisoners committed by persons who had been incited by seditious writings in *Yugantar*. The excerpts we have seen from some of the newspapers published in the State, only confirm my sad experience in respect of the evil influence of some of these newspapers. Judging from the great opportunities afforded by the State to ever place at the disposal of the Press correct and first-hand information on matters of public interest, and the failure of some of the editors to avail themselves of this opportunity in spite of the invitation to do so, it is evident that the proprietors, managers or editors, who have published these excerpts have not realized their high sense of responsibility to the public and to their own profession.

It is the duty of every right-thinking and patriotic person to help the development of the embryo National aspirations which are just beginning to shape themselves and to direct all the forces that are working towards its realisation to right

channels by checking effectively the evil influences of the seditious writer and preacher.

The principle of the Bill is to vest in Government the general control of the Press in Mysore so that it may effectively deal with such of the newspapers as disseminate seditious matter and have degenerated from liberty into unrestricted license. The main provisions of this Bill are adopted from the Regulation in force from 1891 in all the territories beyond British India, administered by the Governor-General in Council, and there was never an occasion either to put an end to the publication of any newspaper or to muzzle the freedom of the Press.

By bringing this Bill on the Statute Book, it serves as a constant reminder to any person engaged in the noble profession of journalism of his high sense of responsibility to the public, and to the high traditions of his profession; and that any dereliction of his duties will render him liable not only to the censure of the public, but also to the penalty which this law imposes. With this reminder constantly before him, he is bound to preserve the high traditions of the profession which wields considerable influence in everyday life.

Believing as I do that this Bill aims at checking the publication of such of the newspapers as preach sedition openly and thus spread anarchism in the country and are a common curse to society and to constituted authority, I heartily vote for the passing of this measure.

MR. BHABHA:—Sir,—If I may be permitted to speak a few words on the subject under consideration, I would lay special stress on two points relating to the ways in which badly conducted papers have for many years past done serious harm to the administrative work of Government, and to the character of the growing youth of the country.

Irresponsible and scurrilous writers have made it their business systematically to distort out of shape and recognition the public acts of high officers by putting the most ingenious constructions upon them, and to attribute to them motives of all kinds in the most unfair and uncharitable manner when the officers have merely been doing their duty to the State and to the public. They invent from a diseased and perverted imagination circumstances which have no foundation in fact, merely for the purpose of bringing authority into contempt or satisfying a private grudge against those officers for whom they have conceived a dislike. This vilification of the character and acts of public men which some journalists have systematically practised has tended to weaken their authority and the discipline of their departments. Even when the means of ascertaining the actual facts are within easy reach, they do not make the least attempt to avail themselves of them, but delight in bringing all authority into contempt by perverting and misrepresenting facts. They take a grim pleasure in encouraging false complaints and insubordination, and destroying the loyalty and good feeling of subordinate officials. The credulous and ignorant public who have great faith in all that appears in print are taught to look upon Government Officers as their natural enemies and not as men who are honestly doing their duty by the public and trying to promote their interests and welfare. In administrative work where the balance has to be held evenly between conflicting interests and claims, the decisions of higher authorities must cause dissatisfaction to some. And if every one who is dissatisfied is allowed freely to magnify and air petty grievances in the press, it can easily be understood how the work of administration is hampered and rendered unnecessarily difficult and how discipline is destroyed.

There are, however, to my mind far more disastrous effects produced by this kind of scurrilous journalism on the minds of the growing youth of the country. Youth is a time of strong impulses, quick imagination and impracticable ideals. When undeveloped minds and unformed characters are influenced day after day by the venomous outpourings of diseased intellects, it can be seen how the feelings of young men can be easily aroused against people in authority, how their generous impulses can be stifled, and how false notions of misguided patriotism can be implanted in their minds which easily lead them to rash and unrestrained actions. When, however, young men who should scrupulously abstain from all spurious patriotism and mischievous agitations have the misfortune to have cheap papers near at hand to misguide them the evil effects on their character are bound to be extremely disastrous.

It is the cheap local prints ready to hand that are most dangerous to the morals and character of youth. It is these papers that are usually conducted without regard to principles of fairness or a trace of liberality of views. The seeds planted by such journals in early youth fructify later in life and are apt to create a class of citizens who are disloyal and discontented. Happily the Government of His Highness the Maharaja are alive to this danger and are taking effective measures to avert a great danger to the people of the country.

The important law which is about to be passed will it is hoped rid the State of an infamous press and its disastrous effects on the minds of boys at school as well as the ignorant public. The legislation undertaken to-day has not come a day too soon. Whatever enthusiasts who preach the inviolable freedom of the Press may say to the contrary, I feel perfectly convinced that in the present state of India it is absolutely necessary in the interests of good Government and the education of the rising generation to curb the unrestrained license of an irresponsible and scurrilous Press.

MR. V. N. NARASIMHIENGAR:—I have only to say a few words in order to supplement what has been stated already.

I have been a close student of the rise and the growth of the Native Press,—of the Indian Press, I should say—and my own inspirations and ideas of free journalism have been derived from the best traditions of the English Press. I remember what has been said by men like John Bright, Macaulay and other great writers and thinkers, and I should have under other circumstances viewed with suspicion any attempt, any measure, to curb the normal freedom of free journalism. But recent events have greatly disillusioned me. Instead of being a free Press, a certain section of our Indian Press has become an unlicensed Press, and journalism has been travestied by being prostituted for the purpose of blackmailing, for murdering the reputation of men rendering their honest services to the country, and also for violating the vicinity of the *sacro-sanct* Throne and its illustrious occupant. It has been my shame-faced experience of the last three years to have read articles at which I have not ceased to blush. In Mysore, especially, certain extracts have been shown to me in the course of this morning which fully justify the restrictions proposed to be imposed on the Press in Mysore.

I have been a student of the veranacular papers also, the vernacular papers which have been indulging in scurrilous writings, not only in Kannada but also in Tamil, in which things which ought not to be said by any level-headed man were said. I have been reading most of these papers and therefore I have no hesitation in saying that the time has come to put certain restrictions upon the unlicensed exercise of this sort of journalism. With its double-edged weapon it is capable of doing infinite good. As Mr. Bhabha has just now said, when it is ill-directed, it is capable of causing not only incalculable harm at present, but in the future also, by distorting the views of the rising generation.

With regard to the provisions of the Bill itself, it has been said that, like other breaches of law, the breaches of proper journalism ought to be inquired into and disposed of by judicial tribunals; if any person is found guilty he should be punished judicially, and so on. But I think the present measure rightly aims at treating this as a sort of political offence, and providing for the banishment of the offender out of the country. This sort of punishment is not unknown to the history of Mysore. Within the last generation, there have been offenders sent out of the limits of the country. Mysore should never be an asylum to the imbeciles and undesirables of other places.

Another thing is this: Who are the people who conduct these papers generally? There is a Sanskrit proverb, "*Bhagnah krisher bhâgavato bhavanti*," which means that people who fail in other walks of life become *bhâgavatas*. We have schoolmasters haunting the pial schools, who know very little themselves, pretending to teach others and the rising generation to boot. Taking the qualifications, literary and psychological, of some of these self-constituted teachers of public opinion—the editors—what wonder is there that the Indian Press is generally looked down upon?

I have also come across instances in which the conductors of such papers have tried to blackmail men highly placed, not only men occupying high positions but also those that command wealth. The Press has been very often prostituted for this base purpose.

Although I have been hesitating before, I now think that the time has arrived for such a measure, and I therefore heartily second it.

RAJAMANTRAPRAVINA MR. SRINIVASA IYENGAR :—Mr. President,—With your kind permission, I beg to say a few words in support of the measure now before the Council. The law as it stands at present does not enable Government to deal with newspapers which degenerate from liberty to license. The measure before us will not affect in any way, any properly and decently conducted journal or newspaper. It will only affect newspapers which, instead of vindicating their existence, systematically abuse their opportunities. Such a measure has been abundantly shown to be imperatively necessary. We have the assurance of the Government that the machinery of this law will not be put in motion except in very exceptional cases and when there is serious provocation; that is, in cases which present a most serious aspect. That being so, I have no hesitation in saying that this is a salutary measure and ought to meet with the approval of all right-thinking men.

I accordingly support the Bill.

THE DEWAN :—Gentlemen,—Before I put the Bill formally to the vote, I wish to say a few words on this measure. In the first place it is a source of sincere gratification to His Highness' Government that the Bill has received the support of both the official and the non-official members of this Council. In view of the growing evil of irresponsible journalism the Government of His Highness the Maharaja had at one stage thought of taking action against certain offending newspapers by issuing a summary order for their confiscation as was once done in 1894. But on further consideration, the Government decided that it would be better to take power under a legislative enactment to regulate the publication of newspapers. They felt sure that the abuse of the liberty of the Press had gone to such lengths and had become such a source of public danger that they might count on the support of all members of the Legislative Council, both official and non-official, in giving the Government the very necessary power that they proposed to take under the Regulation. His Highness' Government cannot but be pleased that their anticipations have been so completely fulfilled and it is particularly gratifying to them that the non-official members have not contented themselves with giving a silent vote but have recognized the necessity for legislation and cordially supported the principle of the measure. By so readily accepting the Bill, they have given proof of the confidence the public feel that the Government may safely be entrusted with the powers they have sought for. I may assure the Council and through them the general public that the Government of His Highness the Maharaja will on their part endeavour in acting under the Regulation to show that this confidence is not misplaced. In fact to persons who have watched the attitude of the Mysore Government towards the Press in Mysore, it must have been a wonder that in the face of persistent vilification and mischief-making the Government should not have long before this put into force the undoubted power they possess of summarily suppressing the papers concerned. Only the other day a well-informed Indian editor of an English weekly newspaper on the Bombay side, whose opinions rightly command the respect of Europeans and Indians alike, spoke of the freedom of the Press in India as a gift from the British Government and said that even the most advanced Native States did not possess it. He evidently was not aware that in Mysore there exists a Press which rejoices in the possession not only of freedom but of unbridled license. Far be it from me to condemn the whole of the newspapers published in this State, but unfortunately it is the fact that the local Press includes a certain number of organs which answer the description of a section of the Indian Press given in one of its recent issues by the *Indian Nation* newspaper. After referring to the characteristics of the more respectable newspapers in India, this is what the *Indian Nation* says of some Newspapers written in English or in the Vernacular :—

"But there is another portion of the Press, written in English or in a Vernacular, which is in the hands of imperfectly educated men and which can only hope

to keep itself going by things sensational. The most sensational of all things in writing is piquant abuse. Therefore the stock-in-trade of some journalists comes to be abuse, either of the Government or of individuals. In abusing Government several of them are careful to avoid, somehow or other, being involved in a charge of sedition. Others have not that degree of prudence or effrontery. But all of this particular class of journalists give themselves the utmost freedom in abusing individuals that are disagreeable to them. Their motive is personal grudge, and their abuse is personal abuse. They indulge in statements most of which are lies. . . . . Their great satisfaction is that they can sit in judgment over all the world and can abuse men under the safe cover of an anonymous 'we'."

It might have been hoped that with time an improvement would have taken place in the tone of local journalism, but instead of appreciating the freedom which they have enjoyed, the newspapers in Mysore of the type I am referring to, emboldened by immunity, have embarked on a career of systematic vilification of Government and its officers and of poisoning the minds of the people with untruths and perversions of facts. Their recklessness and perversity have gone so far that they even decline to accept corrections of misstatements when offered by the Government. This is a fact that I can vouch for from personal knowledge, and I may say also that the editor of one of these newspapers even declined—in a manner anything but courteous—an invitation from the Dewan himself to see him personally with a view to the editor being furnished with correct information.

This spirit of lawlessness is one which no responsible Government can countenance. What these newspapers would appear to claim is absolute freedom from all restraint. Such is the terror inspired by them that Government officials both at head-quarters and in the Districts will do anything to secure immunity from abuse in the papers or to be in the good graces of the editors. The different professions have their own customary codes which guide and regulate the actions of those that follow them. But journalism is still foreign to the genius of India, and in the hands of half-educated and undisciplined men, it may prove dangerous to society as is actually happening before our eyes. I daresay you have all seen the excerpts from the newspapers which have been placed at your disposal, and this will have given you a pretty clear idea of the extent and character of the mischief that is being worked. In the hands of the journalists of the type we have in view, a kind of spurious public opinion is being manufactured and this is gradually displacing the genuine article, especially out in the Districts. The rural population know that what they read in the newspapers has no correspondence with the reality they are familiar with, as has been explained by Mr. Syed Amir Hassan and Mr. Nagappa, but constant iteration of untrue statements, constant coloured presentation of facts, and constant imputation of unworthy motives to the representatives of Government from day to day and week to week have their own effect on the rural mind. I have seen members of the Representative Assembly who come from the remoter Districts feel startled to find, when face to face with the officers of the central Government and with correct information about the measures of Government and their intentions, how badly they had been misled by the newspapers. But this disillusionment is of short duration, and when they go back to their Districts they again come under the spell of the newspapers. It is on newspapers of this class that the legislation we are going to adopt is intended to have a deterrent effect.

You may ask, Why not prosecute these papers for libel or sedition? The answer is that this would only give the papers concerned an undesirable notoriety, and there would be no guarantee that the offence would not be repeated. The evils which the Bill is intended to meet are mainly two—first the abuse of His Highness' Government in a manner calculated to undermine the loyalty of the people to, and their respect for, His Highness, and secondly, attacks on the British Government calculated to mislead and prejudice the people of Mysore against the Paramount Power. Both these are manifestations of the same new spirit, namely a spirit of impatience against all authority. To prevent the spread of such a spirit is as much a matter of importance to a Native State as it is to the British Government. Both are bound by a solidarity of interests. So long as the newspapers confined their attacks to the officers of His Highness' Government, the conduct of these newspapers was treated as almost a matter of indifference, but when it was found that the tendency to malign Government and undermine His Highness'

authority was spreading, and that the newspapers began to indulge in hostile criticism of the acts of the British Government as well, it was felt that the evil had assumed serious proportions which could no longer be disregarded. In view of what is going on in other parts of India under direct British Rule we should be wanting in our duty to the Paramount Power if we added to its troubles by allowing the newspapers published in the State to indulge in misrepresenting its actions and its motives. It may be urged that these newspapers are not really hostile to Government and only want Swadeshism and amelioration of the condition of the people, and considering that Mysore enjoys practically Swaraj under the protection and with the sympathy of the British Government, it is indeed difficult to believe that they are really animated by a feeling of active hostility either to the Mysore Government or to the Paramount Power, and in writing as they do about the movements going on in British India, I prefer to think that they are only imitating the journalists outside Mysore. How else are we to explain what was told me the other day that some schoolboys led by their masters held a Sivaji celebration in the Mysore City? What can this be but pure mimicry without giving a thought as to the meaning of the act or its propriety in a Native State ruled by their own Maharaja, who is representative of an ancient dynasty which is justly held in the greatest reverence and affection? I have again been told that at a meeting in Mysore some months ago, a gentleman connected with one of the schools had given expression to the idea that people would be justified in getting rid by violent means of rulers and Government officials who tyrannised over the people. I do not remember in what connection or in regard to whom this amiable sentiment was uttered, but you can understand how utterly out of place it was in Mysore, the Ruler of which had only recently remitted taxation to the extent of some lakhs of rupees, had given the people the benefits of free education, had organised a costly department of Sanitation for the State, had taken the first steps towards the separation of Judicial from Executive functions, and effected many other improvements for which people elsewhere have been agitating all these years.

But whether we treat actions like these as the outcome of open hostility or meaningless mimicry, their effect upon the young and ignorant is the same, and there can be no question that it is the imperative duty of the Government to see that this spirit of disloyalty does not spread. The best way of attaining this end is to warn the Press betimes of the dangerous consequences of overstepping the bounds of fair and honest criticism. It does not follow because we have a law like this that it will be necessary to enforce its punitive sections. The presence of an enactment of this kind on the Statute Book will, I consider, have also an educative effect. It will, as observed by Mr. Nagappa, serve to remind journalists of the high nature of their calling and of their responsibilities towards the constituted Government and towards society. While it will have a restraining influence upon newspapers given to manufacturing public opinion, genuine public opinion will be left untouched by it. His Highness' Government have always acted in the full light of public opinion. They have consistently encouraged the expression of genuine public opinion. This has been their policy in the past, and I may assure you that this will be their policy in the future.

The motion was put to the Council and carried unanimously.

The Council then adjourned.

V. P. MADHAVA RAO,
President.